

## Stephenson authors book on ferries; eighth publication

**Contains many photographs which have never been exhibited**

Rich in local lore, *Parker's Ferry*, a new book by E. Frank Stephenson, Jr., offers insight into the history of river ferries in the Roanoke-Chowan area as well as the Meherrin and Chowan rivers.

Stephenson, director of Chowan's Upward Bound program, has written and published eight books, including his most recent publication, *Gatling - A Photographic Remembrance* that has been distributed worldwide. The noted author has also written numerous newspaper and magazine articles focusing on the history of the Roanoke-Chowan region.

Stephenson's new book, published by Meherrin River Press, includes 215 photographs, many of which have never been published or exhibited before. The book traces the history of Parker's Ferry, located on the Meherrin River near Murfreesboro, and also gives the history of other ferries that operated many years ago in the northeastern section of the state.

Stephenson included information about

Maney's Ferry, which General Lafayette used to cross the Chowan River on his way to Murfreesboro in 1825.

The popular author completed extensive research on the herring fishing industry that flourished in the early spring on area rivers. One chapter is devoted to the official customs station, once located near Parker's Ferry and used for imports and exports during colonial days. Also the history of the Meherrin Indian tribe is covered in one chapter of the publication.

Stephenson was born and raised on a farm in the northeastern part of Hertford County near Parker's Ferry and spent much of his childhood days along the Meherrin River.

The author has been associated with Chowan College for the past 27 years as an administrative officer. A graduate of Chowan, he also holds both bachelor's and master's degrees from North Carolina State University and has completed additional graduate study at the University of Virginia.



E. Frank Stephenson

... new book traces history of river ferries

A self-taught photographer, many of his photographs have been exhibited in restaurants, museums and art galleries. One of his forthcoming books, *North Carolina's Herring Fishermen*, is a photographic documentary of the herring fishermen on the Chowan and Meherrin rivers.

Stephenson is also co-authoring a book with Raymond Whitehead of Murfreesboro on three black baseball teams in Hertford County during the 1940s and 1950s.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Stephenson led the effort to save the historic homes in Murfreesboro from destruction. He was also involved in saving the Meherrin River canal and later in the 1990s he was instrumental in preserving the research papers and forty years of newspapers of the late writer and publisher F. Roy Johnson of Murfreesboro.

In recognition of his community work and service, he has been honored with numerous awards including The Book of Golden Deeds by the Murfreesboro Exchange Club, Community Service Award by the Murfreesboro Industrial Development Corporation, and the Mayor's Award, given by the Town of Murfreesboro.

*Parker's Ferry*, which sells for \$20 as well as other books by Stephenson, is available through the Chowan bookstore, The Trading Post, or from Meherrin River Press, 301 E. Broad Street, Murfreesboro, NC 27855.

## Continuing support for college progress

Raymond Benthall, right, senior vice president of Centura Bank in Murfreesboro, presents a check to Laurie Bass, director of annual giving, to support the "Day for Chowan" drive held last November. More than \$160,000 in gifts and pledges has been received for the college's annual event which was chaired by Charles Hughes of Ahoskie and Diane Dixon of Murfreesboro. Benthall and Jane Taylor were co-chairs for the 1994 "Day for Chowan."



## Dr. Davis delivers address at Spring Honors Convocation

**"Stand on the firm ground of reality, but aim high."**

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vocation/ As my two eyes make one in sight." Thoreau left the woods, after he learned something of what they could teach him, to learn more from the world beyond. Gray, Erasmus, Lewis, Thoreau, and Frost know it is not wise to be foolish. A foolish person sees life in bits, as if looking down the wrong end of a telescope, unable to view the fuller picture; true, as Thoreau warns, often, "Our life is frittered away by detail" (457), but a foolish person's life may be little more than unattached details, obscuring or lacking meaning because unconnected to a life that may give them meaning and a meaning that may give them life. Many, not just fools, have lost or never found the wholeness of life these writers seek, one to which knowledge opens insights and can offer more than glimpses.

College is an opportunity to gain such knowledge. Sagan suggests one means and one reason to go to college as he says that, to learn the joy of learning, "Teens should be surrounded by people who know deep things," not by fools or by idolators at the altar of stupidity. Seeking knowledge in college, the seeker should seize that opportunity from faculty, fellow students, and wherever it is to be found, for the seeker does not scorn learning or shun differing sources of knowledge.

An old test to determine whether a person is an intellectual is to ask, "Who are the James boys?" The joke is that, if you say Frank and Jesse instead of William and Henry, you flunk. But to understand the joke, you must know both sets of Jameses. Popular culture is still culture. The more one knows, the more one can laugh at, the more jokes one can "get." Imagine God's laughter. When T. S. Eliot died, the sad response of his equally intellectual friend and fellow poet, Ezra Pound, was "Who is there now for me to share a joke with?"

We sometimes set up our own barriers to sharing. Like the warden in *Cool Hand Luke*, we can say, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." Faulty communication ruins both a good joke and learning. The person who knows everything can't learn anything. Smugness in education, as in ignorance, is dumb.

Learn to learn. Don't deceive yourself. Remember, as Twain reminds us, "Noise proves nothing. Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she had laid an asteroid." You might cackle that your history essay is an "A," as in "asteroid," but objective examination might prove it to be a black hole, a place where splendid as well as dimly developed ideas disappear because they do not adhere to a core. College can provide a core and a foundation for

further learning, for college is not the end of study but preparation for and one step toward a lifelong pursuit.

"Training is everything," Twain says. "The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education." You might rather be a peach than a bitter almond; at least connotatively, being called or thought a peach is better. Prepare yourself to meet the world on your best terms. A college education may or may not be the best means for you to do so; you may wish to be a cabbage rather than a cauliflower, but don't let it be said of you as in another axiom from Mark Twain: "He is useless on top of the grown; he ought to be under it, inspiring the cabbages." Stand on the firm ground of reality, but aim high. Do so after assessing yourself candidly, sometimes, as the situation dictates, brutally. Smart is as smart does.

Forrest Gump truthfully and humbly says, "I am not a smart man." Do you stand with Forrest? Or do you wish to say with those honored here today and with Clay Boy, as he leaves home for college in *Spencer's Mountain*, novel and movie precursor to television's *The Waltons*: "I expect to go right far"?

Like people before you, in the past and here today, in seeking your true self, you CAN "go right far."